

REMARKS

The Examiner is thanked for his indication of willingness to consider this after-final amendment in light of the change of hands of this file. Claims 1-21 stand finally rejected as anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,014,622 to Jullian ("Jullian"). Jullian teaches a system including a master device and a number of connected slave devices, in which the master device obtains slave device identifications by querying and receiving an identifying response from every connected slave device. See col. 17, lines 7-64 and col. 18, line 64 to col. 19, line 15 (describing the QUERY ADDRESS command).

By the present amendment, independent claims 1, 14, 18, and 21 have been amended to clarify that identification information for one or more slave devices is loaded into the master device before a detection command is issued by the master device, and the response by any unidentified slave devices (and only them) is then made in response to that detection command. These claims are also amended to replace phrases to the effect of "identification information for which has not been loaded into the master device" with more succinct and accurate terminology to the effect of "have not been identified to the master device." In contrast to the teachings of Jullian, as claimed, one or more slave device identifications are pre-loaded in the master device, after which a detection command is issued, and then identifying responses thereto are issued only by any slave devices that have not already been identified to the master device. The Final Office Action states at pages 2-3 that:

... The new limitations of the claims are met by the system of Jullian, for instance, when no slave devices have been previously identified, which is the case at the first QUERY ADDRESS command routine. The entering of the addresses of the blasting caps by the blaster prior to the command routine comprises pre-loaded identification information as claimed.

...

... The response to Applicant's arguments, that the system of Jullian receives an identifying response from every slave device whereas the system of the instant application receives responses from unidentified slave devices, has been discussed above.

Summarily, the device of Jullian clearly anticipates the claimed invention whenever the command is executed and no slave devices have yet been identified since, in that case, all slave devices are unidentified and thus, the only responses are necessarily from devices that have not been loaded in the master device.

It is respectfully submitted that this reasoning is self-contradictory. It is undisputed that in Jullian - when no slave devices have yet been identified - only unidentified slave devices respond. But in that case by definition the limitation of **pre-loading** cannot be met since no slave device identifications have been pre-loaded in the master device. More generally, if only slave devices that have not been identified respond to the master device in Jullian, that is necessarily because no slave device identifications have been pre-loaded into the master device. The device of Jullian cannot ever satisfy both the limitations of pre-loading identifications into the master device and then issuing responses only from slave devices that have not been identified to the master device.

New independent claims 22-24 are also added, and are directed to another distinction of the present invention over Jullian. Specifically, claims 22-24 generally track original independent claims 1, 14, and 18, but add the limitation that the slave devices are programmed with an "identification residing in a fixed memory in the slave device." The use of a fixed memory, as opposed to the volatile memory of Jullian, provides increased security and eliminates the need for constant power to the slaves.

The claimed invention presents significant non-obvious distinctions over Jullian, providing, for example, the potential

for significantly enhanced efficiency in a comparably sized system.

Favorable action on this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks.

Respectfully submitted,

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